

Public Opinion, Foreign Influences and Military Strategists:
Why the United States Pursued a Europe First Strategy in World War II

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War strategizing is a long and complicated process that requires extensive planning and analysis. Many different factors come into play with multiple variables changing constantly. As Commander in Chief, the President of the United States is responsible for the definitive decision on war strategy and is required to make decisions in the best interests of American security. World War II proved to be quite complicated and required President Franklin D. Roosevelt to consider many options. Ultimately, Roosevelt was forced to choose between a Europe-first strategy and a Pacific-first strategy in World War II. He chose a Europe-first strategy, with three major factors heavily influencing his decision-making process. The first factor was public opinion. The American people needed to support not only entering World War II, but also the government's decision on which Axis power to pursue first. Second, foreign representatives from all around the world met with Roosevelt and his aides in an attempt to persuade the President to follow their advice. Finally, Roosevelt's military advisers consulted with the President and determined which war strategy made the most sense in terms of manpower, tactics, supplies, and firepower. Roosevelt had to weigh all three influences as he made the difficult decision to pursue a Europe-first strategy over a Pacific-first strategy throughout World War II.

Historians differ over why Roosevelt chose to push the United States toward a Europe-first strategy in World War II. Susan A. Brewer believes that public opinion in the United States demanded entry into the war against Germany. In her book *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda From the Philippines to Iraq*, Brewer concentrates on the Office of War Information. The propaganda office that Roosevelt created to convince the American people the United States needed to fight Germany. The Office of War

Information “adopted the ‘strategy of truth’”¹ and presented the actual facts on Hitler and the German military campaign in Europe. With honest information, American officials concluded, the public outcry would create the opportunity Roosevelt needed to pursue a Europe-first strategy.

According to Warren F. Kimball, foreign influences pressured the United States to adopt a Europe-first strategy. Kimball has written many books on Roosevelt and American diplomacy in the World War II time period. In his book *Forged In War: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War*, Kimball focuses on the Anglo-American relationship and the events that led up to the United States’ entrance into the war. His research revealed that Roosevelt desired to build relationships with foreign leaders and “bounced ideas off his visitors.”² The British badly needed both American entry into the war and a Europe-first strategy in order to relieve German pressure on the British Isles. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill formed a close personal relationship with Roosevelt and actively pushed for the Americans to help the British against Germany. Through diplomats and military leaders, the British possessed serious clout in the Roosevelt Administration and helped persuade Roosevelt to utilize a Europe-first strategy.

Mark A. Stoler presents a different theory in his book, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II*. He argues that American military strategists assessed the military capabilities of Germany and Japan and determined that Germany posed the bigger threat and needed to be dealt with first.³

¹ Susan Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda From the Philippines*

² Warren F. Kimball, *Forged In War: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997), 36.

³ Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 16.

Roosevelt respected the opinions of his military advisors and consulted with them regularly. Disagreements existed amongst the leaders of the United States Army and United States Navy, but a majority believed a Europe- first strategy served as the best course of action for the United States.

Brewer, Kimball and Stoler are all correct in their individual assessments of why Roosevelt decided to enter the war and adopt a Europe-first strategy over a Pacific-first strategy. These historians, however, fail to acknowledge the different influences that factored into Roosevelt's decision. Lynne Olson does the best job by accounting for two of these influences in her book *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, And America's Fight Over World War II, 1939-1941*. Olson acknowledges the immense power of public opinion and foreign influences on Roosevelt prior to and during the United States' entry into World War II.⁴ Olson, however, fails to acknowledge military strategists.

In this paper, I take a more holistic approach on how Roosevelt decided on a Europe-first strategy in World War II. Public opinion, foreign influences and military strategists are the three main factors that impacted Roosevelt's choice. These factors constantly played off of one another and often became intertwined. One cannot gain a solid understanding of Roosevelt's push toward a Europe-first strategy without first comprehending the complexity of Roosevelt's multiple influences.

Public Opinion

Public opinion played a large role in Roosevelt's decision to pursue a Europe-first strategy. A split along ideological lines emerged amongst the American people as the war

⁴ Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, And America's Fight Over World War II, 1939-1941* (New York: Random House, 2013).

developed in Europe and Asia. After World War I, a majority of the American people believed in isolationism. President Woodrow Wilson made a mistake by leading the United States into a European war. Americans underwent major sacrifices during the war, but the American people gained very little with the Treaty of Versailles. Wilson's Fourteen Points plan failed, and the idea of making the world safe for democracy was lost. Isolationists refused to repeat the mistakes of the past. They demanded neutrality and expected Roosevelt to keep the United States out of foreign conflicts.

A small group of interventionists (also known as internationalists) believed the United States needed to continue getting involved in foreign affairs as a global power. The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans could only protect the United States for so long. Eventually, World War II would come to the United States. Internationalists realized the United States needed to stop Hitler in Europe before he could bring the fight to the Americas. A Nazi-controlled Europe might prove too much for the United States to handle alone. They adopted the idea that a strong defense was a good offense. Stop their enemies now, before they caused a bigger problem later.

Roosevelt recognized that he needed to generate public support for a Europe-first strategy in World War II and aligned himself with the interventionists. Along with the interventionists, Roosevelt knew he had to persuade the isolationist majority to adopt interventionism. By 1939, a major portion of the American population already viewed Germany as a threat, but Roosevelt used the media to help convince the American public that a Nazi-controlled Europe served as the biggest threat to American interests. Gradually, the American people believed that the United States needed to take military action against Germany first in order to prevent the fall of all of Europe to Germany.

Public opinion in the United States over World War II radically changed between the years 1939 to 1943. Early in this period, Isolationists held a clear lead over interventionists. Memories of the horrors of World War I haunted people's minds. "The failed peace and economic hard times of the 1930s"⁵ pushed the American people to view their involvement in World War I as a failure. In fact, a 1939 poll conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion found that 59% of Americans felt that the United States made a mistake entering World War I.⁶ The belief was widespread that the United States existed on a continent "in the absence of threats from abroad."⁷ Isolationism dominated public opinion. Congress listened to the voices of constituents and passed a series of Neutrality Acts from 1935 to 1939 designed to "keep the United States out of another European war."⁸ Roosevelt requested that the members of Congress repeal the Neutrality Acts in 1939 because they were "most vitally dangerous to American neutrality, American security, and American peace."⁹ Congress, however, listened to the American public and denied Roosevelt's address by keeping the Neutrality Acts in tact. Americans believed that the United States needed to concentrate on the United States and not the issues plaguing the rest of the world.

As the war in Europe, Africa and Asia continued, however, the power dynamic between isolationists and interventionists began to change. Events such as Adolf Hitler's rapid conquest of Belgium and France and German U-boats challenging American merchant

⁵ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 90.

⁶ Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk, *Public Opinion: 1935-1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 201.

⁷ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929 – 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 386.

⁸ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 90.

⁹ United States Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 68.

ships in the Atlantic caused Americans to view Germany as a threat to the United States. An increasing number of “internationalists began to advocate direct United States intervention.¹⁰ The Japanese surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor definitively galvanized the American people into action. Isolationism essentially ended and interventionism dominated public opinion. The question for the American public then changed from whether or not to go to war to whom should the United States defeat first.

First, one must understand which Axis power the American public viewed as the greatest threat to American security. Prior to Pearl Harbor, the general public believed Germany to be a more immediate threat than Japan. In 1939, an American Institute of Public Opinion poll revealed that 41% of Americans thought that the United States and Germany would go to war sometime in the next twenty-five years.¹¹ That number dropped to 25% when the same poll asked about war with Japan.¹² Americans cared more about European affairs than the expanding power of the Japanese empire. Before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, no Asian power militarily challenged the territorial integrity of the United States. Many Americans believed the Japanese military lacked the “initiative or know-how to launch”¹³ an attack on United States territory. The Pacific Ocean stood as a great barrier between Japanese expansion and the continental United States. Japan and the rest of Asia sat “at the edges”¹⁴ of Americans concerns.

American history possesses few examples of European powers directly attacking United States territory, and Germany appeared aggressive enough to eventually strike at

¹⁰ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 92.

¹¹ Cantril and Strunk, *Public Opinion*, 774.

¹² Ibid, 774.

¹³ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 96.

¹⁴ Waldo Heinrichs, *Threshold of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt & American Entry into World War II* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1988), 36.

the United States. To the American public, a strong Germany seemed more likely to challenge and provoke the United States than a strong Japan. Crossing the Atlantic Ocean was far easier than crossing the Pacific Ocean. The general public believed that if the United States became involved in the war, it would be against Germany first.

Not only did the American people believe Nazi Germany was a more immediate threat than Japan, but they also believed Germany was militarily and industrially stronger than Japan. A German-controlled Europe scared people more than a Japanese-controlled Asia because of the natural, industrial, and military resources Hitler would have access to after conquering other European countries. A 1940 poll in *Fortune* promoted this idea: a surprising 61.2% of Americans believed Germany to be a threat to the United States if it defeated France and England.¹⁵ Britain maintained one of the most powerful navies in the world. France maintained a powerful navy as well and owned valuable ports with access to the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. Smaller countries like Czechoslovakia contained large amounts of money that Hitler needed to fund his German war machine. The countries surrounding Germany possessed everything the Nazis needed for global domination. Europe certainly sat “at the center of Americans’ world concerns.”¹⁶ Americans realized that the United States could not hope to defeat Germany if the Nazis controlled all the wealth and resources of Europe.

Newspaper editorials supported this theory as well. An anonymous letter to the editor in *The New York Times* explained that once Hitler and Germany conquered all the nations of Europe, he would not only take control of the massive and powerful British fleet,

¹⁵ Cantril and Strunk, *Public Opinion*, 774.

¹⁶ Heinrichs. *Threshold of War*, 36.

but own "shipbuilding facilities...in Germany, Norway, Belgium, Britain and Holland."¹⁷ Nazi Germany could then easily produce the largest and most powerful navy in the world. Another anonymous editorial followed a similar argument and stated that the United States could not wait for Germany to turn British resources against Americans such as "Polish, Dutch, Belgian and French resources are being turned against the British."¹⁸ Europe possessed a majority of the most prosperous and affluent nations in the world with powerful militaries and access to important natural resources, major industries and large amounts of money. All of that power under the control of the Nazis was cause for concern.

Hitler served as another reason Americans feared Germany more than Japan. People believed Hitler and his Nazis wanted complete control over the entire world. Two *Fortune* polls in April of 1941 prove this. The first poll found that 69.3% of Americans agreed that Hitler wanted to dominate the United States.¹⁹ The second poll revealed that 68.3% of the American public thought Hitler would never be satisfied until he dominated the United States because of its wealth.²⁰ These polls show that the general public viewed Hitler's ambition as a threat to the security of the United States. Americans knew that Hitler transformed Germany from a weak and starving country back into a military and economic powerhouse. The American people also witnessed the effectiveness of the German war machine as it rolled through Poland, Belgium, France and Denmark. Hitler was a strong and capable military leader who imperiled the safety of the United States.

Personal sentiments in newspapers across the country also display the various fears of the American public prior to Pearl Harbor. Some people did believe Japan to be a serious

¹⁷ "To Defend America," *The New York Times*, June 07, 1940.

¹⁸ "The Choice Before Us," *The New York Times*, June, 07, 1941.

¹⁹ Cantril and Strunk, *Public Opinion*, 776.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 776.

threat and that the United States needed to take action. In 1939, an article by Henry Douglas in *The Washington Post* stated that the United States needed to stop supplying Japan with the necessary resources to wage war. He explained that the Axis alliance was “a tripod” and that the United States must stop “helping Japan hold up her leg.”²¹ A 1940 letter to the editor by “Ex-Soldier” in *The Washington Post* insisted that “Japan’s military clique is quite as ambitious...as Hitler ever thought of being” and that the “attempt to ‘appease’ Japan is as futile as would be an attempt to reason with an octopus.”²² Korean American Seek Hun Kimm submitted an editorial in 1941 that suggested the United States “fight Japan at once” or else there would “hardly be any hope for victory for America.”²³ There is no doubt that the American people knew of Japan’s growing power. Less and less space separated the expanding territory of the Imperial Empire of Japan and the United States.

Most people, however, considered Germany a more dire threat to the security of the United States. An anonymous 1940 letter to the editor in the *New York Times* called the German military the “most mechanized army the world has ever seen.”²⁴ James Lincoln, president of the Lincoln Electric Company, agreed with the previous editorial and explained that if the United States took “an army to Europe it would be chewed to pieces by the present mechanized units of the German army.”²⁵ Another editorial in 1941 adamantly declared that the United States was “going to get war”²⁶ with Hitler and Nazi Germany, especially if Britain fell to German forces. Many Americans believed Britain was the last

²¹ Henry Douglas, “An Embargo Against Japan,” *The Washington Post*, May 09, 1939.

²² Ex-Soldier, “Letters to the Editor: More on Japan,” *The Washington Post*, June 14, 1940.

²³ Seek Hun Kimm, “Letters to the Editor: Would Fight Japan Now,” *The Washington Post*, May 24, 1941.

²⁴ “To Defend America,” *The New York Times*.

²⁵ James F. Lincoln, “Voice of the People: How to Build an Army,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 29, 1940.

²⁶ “The Choice Before Us,” *The New York Times*.

obstacle standing between Hitler and his global aspirations. With Britain ready to fall, war with Germany appeared unavoidable.

The fear of a Nazi-controlled Europe moved the American people to want to prevent Britain from falling to Germany. Keeping Britain in the fight as long as possible would stay the rising power of Hitler in Europe. By 1941, Germany had conquered France, Denmark and Belgium. Americans could not believe the swift German conquest of France. If the United States needed to join the war against the Axis powers, few nations remained to serve as American allies. Americans viewed the British as the last hope for Europe, and many Americans became “convinced that...a danger did exist” from a “looming Nazi threat.”²⁷ Two Gallup polls from August 1941 show America’s support for the British. Over 70% of Americans responded that they supported the British over the Germans.²⁸ Few people “doubted America’s pressing need for allies.”²⁹ Americans realized that Germany needed to be stopped before it conquered Great Britain or the Soviet Union. Based on the facts and words of average American citizens, it is obvious that the general public viewed Germany, Hitler and the Nazis as greater threats than the Japanese prior to Pearl Harbor.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, an increased number of Americans believed Japan to be a greater threat. This is demonstrated in various newspaper articles and editorials. In an editorial published the day after Pearl Harbor, foreign news correspondent for the *New York Times* Anne McCormick calls the Japanese

²⁷ Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 100.

²⁸ George Gallup, "The Gallup Poll: Sentiment for Aid to Britain Not Diminished by Prolonged Nazi-Soviet War, Survey Finds," *The Washington Post*, August 01, 1941.

²⁹ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 97.

“more fanatic than the Nazis” with a “greater indifference to death.”³⁰ Another December 8, 1941 editorial in *The Washington Post* claimed that Japan was the more major threat because of the closer proximity of Japanese territory to territory of the United States. The author explained that with a Japanese defeated United States, “the dream of the Japanese militarists would be realized.”³¹ A direct Japanese attack on the United States scared many Americans, especially those who lived along the West Coast, Alaska and Hawaii. The Japanese already showed they possessed the capability and willingness to attack the United States on American soil. Another attack seemed perfectly plausible.

Even after Pearl Harbor, however, most Americans believed Germany was the more serious threat to the United States. Three days after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, an American Institute of Public Opinion poll showed that 64% of the general public thought that Germany was the principal enemy of America while only 15% chose Japan.³² This trend continued all the way through 1943 in various polls conducted by the major polling organizations, including the American Institute of Public Opinion, the National Opinion Research Center, and the Office of Public Opinion Research. *Fortune* conducted a poll in 1942 that reported that only 10.2% of Americans believed Japan to be a greater threat than Germany while almost 50% of the public viewed Germany as more of a menace.³³ Japan attacked a military base on American soil, but Americans recognized the growing military and industrial power of the Nazi regime in Europe as a greater threat.

³⁰ Anne O'Hare McCormick, "For Americans the Question Period is Over," *The New York Times*, December 08, 1941.

³¹ "The Hour has Struck," *The Washington Post*, December 08, 1941.

³² Cantril and Strunk, *Public Opinion*, 776.

³³ *Ibid*, 776.

Three days after the surprise attack, Hitler declared war against the United States. The majority of the American public feared Nazi Germany more and quickly voiced their opinions in newspapers across the country. Veronique Hall blamed Pearl Harbor on the Germans in her letter to the editor and accused the Nazis of plotting the attack. She also called Nazi Germany the United States "major enemy."³⁴ *The New York Times* warned that if Hitler wins in Europe, then Americans shall be in deadly danger, even if they crushed Japan."³⁵ A letter to the editor in *The Washington Post* about the current war only mentions Germany as a threat and how the United States needs to "obtain maximum efficiency in our war industries."³⁶ Many Americans recognized Germany as the leader and the most powerful of the Axis powers.

Roosevelt employed a multitude of tactics to muster public support for a Europe-first war strategy, but his most influential tactics involved the media. Newspapers, magazines and movies dominated American culture and possessed major powers of persuasion with the public. Roosevelt realized the full persuasive potential of the media and used the media to convince the general public to accept a Europe-first war strategy.³⁷ Roosevelt knew that a majority of Americans viewed Germany as a threat, and he used that understanding to gather more support for a Europe-first strategy through the media.

Fortunately for Roosevelt, groups of interventionists such as the Century Group began to organize and influence public opinion towards a Europe-first strategy. The Century Group served as one of the first groups to support American intervention in World

³⁴ Veronique Hall, "Letters to the Editor: Nazi War Strategy," *The Washington Post*, December 10, 1941.

³⁵ "War with Japan," *The New York Times*, December 08, 1941.

³⁶ "Way to Victory," *The Washington Post*, December 22, 1941.

³⁷ Michael G. Carew, *The Power to Persuade: FDR, the Newsmagazines, and Going to War, 1939-1941* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 1.

War II publically. As early as 1940, the Century Group aggressively called for the “unspeakable...immediate war against Germany.”³⁸ Members included “movers and shakers in the East Coast’s top journalistic, legal, financial, and intellectual circles.”³⁹ Members such as journalist Herbert Agar and CBS news commentator Elmer Davis proved especially influential on public opinion. Century Group members used their influence on media to share their common belief that “nothing short of active U.S. belligerency would save Britain and the rest of Western Civilization.”⁴⁰ Many of the Century Group’s members held positions that placed them in the public eye, but the Century Group as a whole “worked covertly”⁴¹ to organize and spread their interventionist views. Though small in terms of membership, the Century Group possessed major potential to influence the general public through the vast resources available to its exclusive clientele.

The first media Roosevelt used were the newsmagazines-- *Life*, *Look*, *Newsweek* and *Time*—which “reached almost half of the adult American population” by 1939.⁴² This was an unprecedented readership that carried hefty political weight and influence. Roosevelt needed these newsmagazines to support him and his push for war in Europe. Fortunately for Roosevelt, Henry Luce, member of the Century Group and devoted interventionist, owned *Life* and *Time*. Some scholars describe Luce as “America’s single most powerful and innovative mass communicator”⁴³ during the World War II time period. Luce held significant sway over public opinion and did not shy away from using his influence to share

³⁸ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 137.

³⁹ Ibid, 139.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 146.

⁴¹ Mark Lincoln Chadwin, *The War Hawks of World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968) 79.

⁴² Carew, *The Power to Persuade*, 2.

⁴³ James L. Baughman, *Henry R. Luce and the Rise of the American News Media* (Boston: Twayne Publishing, 1987), 1.

his political opinions. His father worked in China as a missionary and taught his son to view the United States as a “selfless Western power.”⁴⁴ Ultimately, this view of the United States led Luce to believe that America alone deserved to be the world leader for freedom, human rights and democracy. He believed that as a world power, the United States could not act “like an infinitely mightier Switzerland.”⁴⁵ Luce proved to be one of the most influential interventionists.

Luce made his best argument for American entry into the European front when he published his article “The American Century” on February 17, 1941 in *Life*. In his article, Luce masterfully crafts a logical and emotional argument for how the United States was already in the war and needed to fully commit to stopping Hitler in Europe. He frankly stated that Americans wanted “Hitler stopped - more than (Americans) want(ed) to stay out of the war.”⁴⁶ A world in which Hitler defeats Great Britain and controls Europe was a world in which the United States could not hope to thrive or possibly even survive. Luce explained that American participation in the war was “needed for the shaping of the future of America and of the world.”⁴⁷ The world desperately needed American ideals such as democracy and free enterprise. Wilson failed to take advantage of the opportunity to make the United States the leading world power and create peace.⁴⁸ In order to gain leadership on the global stage, the United States needed to secure an American-dominated peace in

⁴⁴ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁵ Mark Lincoln Chadwin, *The War Hawks: American Interventionism Before Pearl Harbor* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 63.

⁴⁶ Henry R. Luce, “The American Century,” originally published in *Life* (1941), republished in *Diplomatic History* (1999) 23 (2), 161.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 166.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 166-167.

Europe. Fully committing to the war provided Roosevelt and the American people with a rare second chance to fix Wilson's mistakes.

Republican adversaries of Roosevelt controlled and/or owned the other two popular newsmagazines. This proved to be quite an obstacle for the Roosevelt Administration because the newsmagazines constantly published articles against the policies of Roosevelt. Roosevelt fixed the problem in 1940 by assigning people in his administration to convince the owners of *Look* and *Newsweek* to promote "the threat of the Nazi-led Axis."⁴⁹ Roosevelt wanted all four of the big newsmagazines to support a Europe-first strategy. Those who could not be convinced were bribed with high positions in the federal government that reported only to Roosevelt.⁵⁰ *Look* and *Newsweek* publishers quickly changed their attitude towards war and the Roosevelt Administration. They followed the example set by Henry Luce and increased the number of stories on war-related events, especially in Europe.

The newsmagazines also increased the number of favorable stories on how Roosevelt handled current political situations. *Life*, *Look*, *Newsweek* and *Time* published around three times more war stories about Germany than about Japan between 1939 and 1941.⁵¹ This put Germany in the forefront of the American public's mind. American hero and staunch isolationist Charles Lindbergh feared the increasingly sensationalist newspaper stories pushing for American involvement in the war, but he feared the American public's willingness to go "along with the plan"⁵² even more. The increased

⁴⁹ Carew, *The Power to Persuade*, 9.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid, 57-71.

⁵² Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 102.

number of articles on Nazi war stories helped convince Americans that Nazi Germany was a greater threat to American security than the Japanese Empire.

With prompting from the Roosevelt Administration, reporters joined the conversation over the threats of Nazi Germany and the Japanese Empire. Mark Sullivan of *The Washington Post* also pointed out that Nazi Germany had to be destroyed first in order to save American allies which would eventually help the United States against Japan. Sullivan used the Soviet Union as an example in his article and wrote that the Russians prioritized fighting Hitler and the Nazis because “a large portion of Russian’s territory was occupied by Germany.”⁵³ Barnet Nover completely agreed with his fellow reporter and insisted that the United States must go to Europe first and save the Soviet Union from Germany in order for the Red Army to join “the United States, Great Britain and China...in combating the menace that confronts them all.”⁵⁴ Reporters realized that the United States required allies in order to defeat the fascist regimes of Germany and Japan. In order to have allies, the United States needed to intervene in the European continent and save countries from the wrath of Hitler’s army.

In 1941, another interventionist group in support of a Europe-first strategy called the Fight for Freedom started to gain sway with the American public. The Century Group disbanded in 1941 because it lacked “a grassroots structure and broad-based financial support.”⁵⁵ Some of the former Century Group members collaborated in the founding of Fight For Freedom, and they resolved to be more direct in their push for American

⁵³ Mark Sullivan, "The New Pact: Our Objectives in the War," *The Washington Post*, January 05, 1942.

⁵⁴ Barnet Nover, "The Die is Cast: War Breaks Out in the Pacific," *The Washington Post*, December 08, 1941.

⁵⁵ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 323.

intervention against Nazi Germany. They expanded their membership by inviting more important public figures to join their cause. These people included Republican politician Wendell Willkie, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee Carter Glass and Bishop Henry W. Hobson.⁵⁶ Other new members included presidents of multiple universities, members of the clergy and business elites.⁵⁷ Former members of the Century Group hoped that the inclusion of more public figures would broaden their appeal to the masses.

Fight for Freedom also collaborated with other organizations that supported a Germany first strategy such as Friends of Democracy. Friends of Democracy proved “more militant”⁵⁸ and published scathing remarks about isolationists, but the collaboration between the groups proved to be efficient and effective. Instead of relying solely on national media, Fight For Freedom members decided to work locally and build a national movement from the ground up. Fight for Freedom members organized “an extensive network of chapters throughout the country” and these chapters “recruited local newspapers...and sponsored rallies and letter writing campaigns to Congress.”⁵⁹ Chapters opened in around “sixty-five major cities, mostly in the regions along the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf coasts,”⁶⁰ but chapters existed in the Midwest and Rocky Mountains regions as well. They gained a wider public audience than the Century Group and played a pivotal role in building public support for a Europe-first strategy.

The Roosevelt Administration used posters as another strategy to create public support for a Europe-first strategy. Roosevelt established the Office of War Information in

⁵⁶ Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II*, 164-165.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 168.

⁵⁸ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 324.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 324.

⁶⁰ Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II*, 171.

1942 to promote ongoing support for the war and explain to the American people why the United States needed to fight the Nazis.⁶¹ The Office of War Information published many posters throughout the United States and placed them in high visibility areas to keep the war in the public's mind. A majority of these posters focused on mobilizing the domestic population for supporting war efforts and fostering "public support for U.S. aid to nations resisting Nazi aggression."⁶² Many of these posters contained imagery designed to explain why the United States chose to follow a Europe-first strategy.



Figure 1⁶³



Figure 2⁶⁴

⁶¹ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 88.

⁶² Ibid, 90.

⁶³ Fig. 1. Lawrence Beall Smith, *Don't Let that Shadow Touch Them: Buy War Bonds*. Poster, World War II Poster Collection at Northwestern University Library, Evanston, Illinois, www.library.northwestern.edu/libraries-collections/evanston-campus/government-information/world-war-ii-poster-collection.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 are propaganda posters designed to portray Nazi Germany as a direct threat to the American way of life. Americans were “in imminent danger”⁶⁵ from Hitler, and Americans needed to act soon. Figure 1 depicts young American children almost being touched by the shadow of a Nazi swastika. The United States government conducted a study on commercial posters and “found that images of...children in danger were effective emotional devices.”⁶⁶ The children are playing with symbols of American pride such as the Stars and Stripes and the American airplane. They have no means to protect themselves from the swastika and the American people needed to step in and help before it was too late. The innocence and purity of America’s youth and future were in danger.

Figure 2 shows a swastika branded boot smashing the steeple of an American church. The church was a central part of many American’s lives and serves as a powerful symbol for Nazi oppression. If the American people continued to allow Nazi aggression to go unchecked, the Nazis would bring the fight to the American continents. If the Nazis conquered Europe and moved on to the United States nothing would be safe, including religion. The United States entered the war to protect the American way of life. The Nazis would stamp out the basic rights Americans held dear such as freedom of religion. The poster played “on the public's fear of the enemy”⁶⁷ and the consequences of not stopping Hitler in Europe.

⁶⁴ Fig. 2. C. R. Miller, *We’re Fighting to Prevent This*, Poster, Powers of Persuasion at The National Archives, www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html

⁶⁵ "Powers of Persuasion," National Archives and Records Administration. www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid



Figure 3⁶⁸

Glenn Grohe's poster in Figure 3 represents another fear held by the American public. The poster depicts a partially hidden German soldier with piercing eyes "watching" American citizens. This means that Hitler and the German Army already had their eyes set on infiltrating the United States and taking the war into the Western Hemisphere. German spies could be anywhere, gathering intelligence on American industry and military might. The intent was to create a sense of paranoia among the American public and explain why Americans needed to support immediate action against Germany, not Japan.

⁶⁸ Fig. 3. Glenn Ernest Grohe, *He's Watching You*, Poster, World War II Poster Collection at Northwestern University Library, Evanston, Illinois, www.library.northwestern.edu/libraries-collections/evanston-campus/government-information/world-war-ii-poster-collection.

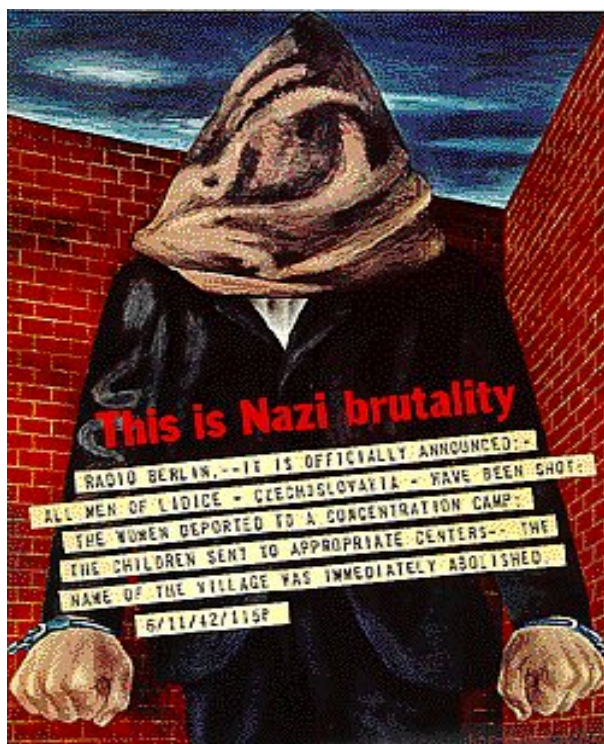


Figure 4⁶⁹

Americans also hated the brutality of the Nazis. Posters such as Figure 4 informed the general public of the horrifying deeds perpetrated by Hitler and his SS units against the people they conquered. Nazis committed crimes against humanity in a way that Americans viewed as a new kind of evil. Another hidden message is contained in the poster. Implied in this image is the “idea that what happened there could happen here.”⁷⁰ Americans needed to prevent the evils of Nazi Germany coming to the United States. The men and women of the United States possessed a duty not only to protect themselves, but also those oppressed by the Nazi regime.

Hollywood eventually joined other media outlets in promoting a Europe-first strategy to the American public. Before Hollywood started releasing movies in support of a

⁶⁹ Ben Shahn, *This is Nazi Brutality*, Poster, Powers of Persuasion at The National Archives, www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/warning/warning.html.

⁷⁰ “Powers of Persuasion,” National Archives and Records Administration,

Europe-first strategy, newsreels shown before movies displayed feature stories on Hitler and his Nazi regime. These stories shared with the American public the threat Germany “posed to peace.”⁷¹ Henry Luce again played an important role with his newsreel service *March of Time*. *March of Time* produced a newsreel titled “Inside Nazi Germany,” which depicted German brutality toward Jewish people such as German “police rounding up Jews.”⁷² These newsreels aired in movie theaters across the country and informed millions of Americans about Nazi brutality.

Along with newsreels, many films depicted the evil actions of Nazi Germany. Films such as *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, *Foreign Correspondent* and *Sergeant York* showed Hollywood’s producer’s “interventionist leanings.”⁷³ Many movie producers, directors and actors were either involved in the Century Group or Fight for Freedom, including the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences President Walter Wanger and famous actor Humphrey Bogart.⁷⁴ Film proved especially powerful for explaining why Americans should support a Europe-first strategy. Moviegoers actually saw clips of the war in Europe and the power of the Nazi military. These films put powerful images of German cruelty and military might in the minds of millions of Americans.

Another medium Roosevelt explored in his quest to win over the American public was radio. Famous for his ‘fireside chats,’ Roosevelt “mastered the use of radio to reach” the American people.⁷⁵ He talked directly to American listeners and explained his opinions and actions on current events such as the growing war in Europe. In his September 3, 1939

⁷¹ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 364.

⁷² Ibid, 364.

⁷³ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 92.

⁷⁴ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 361.

⁷⁵ Brewer, *Why America Fights*, 102.

radio address to the people, Roosevelt cautioned Americans to “realize that every word that comes through the air, every ship that sails the sea, every battle that is fought does affect the American future.”⁷⁶ He mentioned this in order to show the isolationists that neutrality did not equal an escape from the problems and issues in Europe.

In his December 29, 1940 fireside chat, Roosevelt explained to the nation the growing threats of Nazi Germany. He stated that there was “danger ahead—danger against which we must prepare.”⁷⁷ After the hostile exchange between a German U-boat and the U.S. Destroyer Greer in September of 1941, Roosevelt informed the public of the Nazi threat to American trade and safety.⁷⁸ He wished to ready the American people for the inevitable conflict with the Axis powers and the growing threat to American interests in the Western Hemisphere. Hopefully, the reality of German aggression in the Atlantic Ocean would gather support for his ideas behind his rearmament programs. Roosevelt needed the general public to realize the dire gravity of the situation.

Two days after Pearl Harbor Roosevelt addressed the nation on the radio and declared that the United States was “now in this war.”⁷⁹ Congress had approved Roosevelt’s plea to declare “a state of war...between the United States and the Japanese Empire.”⁸⁰ The United States could no longer hide behind a shield of neutrality. Not only did Roosevelt

⁷⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On the European War," (09/03/1939) *Fireside Chats Of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, accessed February 25, 2015, millercenter.org/president/speeches#fdroosevelt.

⁷⁷ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On National Security," (12/29/1940) *Fireside Chats Of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, accessed February 25, 2015, millercenter.org/president/speeches#fdroosevelt.

⁷⁸ Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 497.

⁷⁹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On the Declaration of War with Japan," (12/09/1941) *Fireside Chats Of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, accessed February 25, 2015 millercenter.org/president/speeches#fdroosevelt.

⁸⁰ United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: Japan, 1931-1941*, Volume II, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 794. Hereafter cited as FRUS.

mention Pearl Harbor and the Japanese aggressors, but he also mentioned the growing power of Hitler and Nazi Germany in Europe. Three days later, Congress passed Roosevelt's request to declare war on Germany and Italy because they represented the greatest "challenge to life, liberty, and civilization."⁸¹ Finally, Roosevelt confirmed the Europe-first strategy to the American public in his 1943 fireside chat on his visits with foreign leaders at the Teheran and Cairo Conferences. He explained the vital importance of "launching a gigantic attack upon Germany"⁸² along with the necessity of keeping Germany's enemies such as the Soviet Union and Great Britain in the war. Through various media outlets, Roosevelt gradually won over the American public on the idea of a Europe-first war strategy.

By then, public opinion in the United States clearly favored a Europe-first war strategy. In 1939, the American public desired to stay neutral, but people also recognized the expanding reach of foreign aggressors and knew that the United States needed to step in and eventually fight. Hitler and a Nazi-controlled Europe proved to be a greater threat than Japan in the general public's eye. Roosevelt and the American people wanted Germany to be defeated before concentrating all efforts on the Japanese threat in the Pacific. Even after a surprise attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor, Americans still feared Germany more. Various polls from multiple sources and personal sentiments in letters to the editors all over the United States display this fear. Hitler and the Nazis were the biggest threat to

⁸¹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Miller Center of the University of Virginia, "Message to Congress Requesting War Declarations with Germany and Italy (December 11, 1941)."

⁸² Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On Teheran and Cairo Conferences," (12/24/1943) *Fireside Chats Of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, accessed February 25, 2015, millercenter.org/president/speeches#fdroosevelt.

American security in the public's opinion and the American people demanded a Germany first strategy in World War II.

Foreign Influences

Roosevelt worked out the complications of what strategy to pursue during World War II with the leaders of the Allied powers. These discussions occurred in various forms including letters, phone calls and conferences conducted all around the world. Almost every country possessed a different idea on where and when to strike according to what worked best for its individual country. Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union all desired a Europe-first strategy in order to stop the German advance. China and Australia, however, hoped for a Pacific-first strategy in order to halt the expansion of the Japanese Empire. Each leader worked hard to advocate for a coalition strategy that benefitted their own country the most. Acknowledging the growing threat of another world war, Roosevelt “constantly sought contacts with foreign leaders and diplomats”⁸³ in order to gain their input and create a plan that best protected American interests. The United States knew the importance of possessing allies in the fight against Germany and Japan, which led Roosevelt to promote a Europe-first strategy in order to save Great Britain and the Soviet Union and liberate France. Ultimately, the Allies decided Nazi Germany served as the greatest threat to the world and needed to be defeated as soon as possible.

Because they possessed the closest relationship with the United States, the British enjoyed the most influence over Roosevelt's war strategy. As Hitler consolidated his power in the late 1930s and prepared Germany for a campaign to conquer Europe, various British

⁸³ Kimball, *Forged In War*, 36.

officials attempted to push the United States toward involvement against the Nazis. The British did not hold the military might required to defeat the Nazis. They realized that a war against Germany “could not be won without the help of the United States.”⁸⁴ The American public, however, adhered to a strict policy of isolationism before 1941. In order to receive American aid and military involvement, the British needed to tackle the difficult task of convincing the United States to abandon isolationism and adopt internationalism.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill built the closest and most influential relationship with the United States through Roosevelt. Churchill impressed on Roosevelt the dire situation the Allies faced in Europe. In one letter in 1940, Churchill likened Hitler’s attack on the Low Countries to the smashing of individual matchwoods.⁸⁵ He constantly asked Roosevelt for help in the war and refused to give up. The two leaders’ correspondence from September 1939 to April 1945 included some “two thousand letters, memorandums, and messages.”⁸⁶

Roosevelt carefully considered Churchill’s pleas and valued his advice. Both men possessed a “willingness...to communicate from the onset of the war,”⁸⁷ which proved invaluable to the Anglo-American alliance. Roosevelt and Churchill mutually respected each other and valued one another’s input. Unlike many other relations between Roosevelt and foreign leaders, Roosevelt and Churchill actually “became friends.”⁸⁸ Roosevelt “expressed

⁸⁴ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 49.

⁸⁵ Winston S. Churchill, “Letter, Winston S. Churchill to FDR, May 15, 1940,” from *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, ed. by Harold D. Langley, Francis L. Loewenheim and Manfred Jonas (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1975), 94.

⁸⁶ Kimball, *Forged In War*, 31.

⁸⁷ Kimball, *Forged In War*, 39.

⁸⁸ Harold D. Langley, Francis L. Loewenheim and Manfred Jonas, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1975), 3.

his warmth and friendship”⁸⁹ with Churchill on many occasions and showed a genuine caring for Churchill’s well being. In a letter, Roosevelt advised Churchill to take time off and “lay a few bricks or paint another picture.”⁹⁰ Churchill reciprocated Roosevelt’s warmth and explained the weight he attached to everything told him.⁹¹ They built an unprecedented level of trust and established the strong Anglo-American alliance. The leaders agreed to work together to form a war strategy that worked to the best interests of their respective countries, which resulted in the formation of the Europe-first strategy.

Throughout their correspondence, Churchill employed a number of tactics to help persuade Roosevelt. One of his favorite and most effective approaches involved depicting “an America alone against the dictators”⁹² of the Axis powers, specifically Hitler. While many Americans had the misconception that the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans protected the United States from the rest of the world, leaders such as Roosevelt recognized the idea as a fantasy. The Prime Minister contributed to destroying the isolationist illusion by declaring that the weight of a “completely subjugated, Nazified Europe...may be more than we can bear.”⁹³ As France fell to the Nazi advance, Churchill urged Roosevelt to think about the consequences of Hitler gaining access to the French Naval Fleet.⁹⁴ With Japan capturing the resources of the East and Germany conquering the vast military and economic power of

⁸⁹ Ibid, 9.

⁹⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Letter, FDR to Winston S. Churchill, March 18, 1942,” from Archivists of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum, *Significant Documents Collection*, Series 1, Box 1, Document 39, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/collections/franklin/?p=collections/findingaid&id=510>.

⁹¹ Winston S. Churchill, “Telegram, Winston S. Churchill to FDR, April 12, 1942,” from Archivists of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum, *Significant Documents Collection*, Series 1, Box 1, Document 41, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/collections/franklin/?p=collections/findingaid&id=510>.

⁹² Kimball, *Forged in War*, 48.

⁹³ Churchill, “Letter, Winston S. Churchill to FDR, May 15, 1940.”

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Europe, the United States faced threats from both sides. The United States could potentially handle the Japanese by themselves, but not a Nazi- controlled Europe. Churchill wanted Roosevelt and the American public to wake up to the reality that if Germany brought war to the United States, Americans would require allies. In order to have any chance at securing allies, the United States needed to keep the few nations still resisting Hitler in the fight.

Another method Churchill utilized in his quest to rally Roosevelt toward military action against Germany was to picture the British people as heroes willing to die to the last man in defense of their island. The British hoped to convince Americans that “backing Britain was a good bet.”⁹⁵ Churchill made his famous “We Shall Fight On the Beaches” speech on June 4, 1940 after the evacuation of British and French forces at Dunkirk. The speech inspired his fellow countrymen and raised British morale, but Churchill also had another audience in mind, Americans. In this speech, he told the United States that the British “shall never surrender,” and if the British “Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle.”⁹⁶ Supporting the British equaled supporting an ally willing to do everything necessary to win the war. Painting the British as fighters to the end helped sway public opinion in the United States toward supporting the British against Hitler and the Nazis.

Churchill employed a host of officials and agencies to aid him in his effort. Every British official understood that their country needed them to persuade their American counterparts to help against the Germans. British citizens from a wide range of

⁹⁵ Kimball, *Forged in War*, 56.

⁹⁶ Winston S. Churchill, “We Shall Fight On the Beaches,” June 4, 1940 from The Churchill Centre, *Speeches*, 1940: The Finest Hour, www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches.

backgrounds including filmmaking, espionage, diplomacy and politics crossed the pond to help convince the United States to enter the war against Germany. These British citizens proved especially effective.

After Churchill, the British citizen with the most public influence in the United States was Philip Kerr, also known as Lord Lothian. Lord Lothian served as the British Ambassador to the United States from 1939 to his untimely death in 1940. Unlike previous British ambassadors to the United States, Lord Lothian connected well with the American elite and the average American. He “was enamored [of] what he saw”⁹⁷ in the United States and greatly appreciated American culture. In fact, Lord Lothian encouraged British filmmakers and actors such as Alfred Hitchcock to stay in Hollywood and “promote Britain and its war effort.”⁹⁸ He understood the importance of movies in American culture.

More generally, the ambassador recognized the importance of American media. He enjoyed great relations with important members of the media, which “ensured favorable coverage for his speeches and other utterances.”⁹⁹ His message was consistent. Defeating Germany required a joint effort by Britain and the United States. Lord Lothian held an “overriding faith in Anglo-American cooperation.”¹⁰⁰ His message struck a chord with the American people and started to change public opinion. When Britain needed Lord Lothian the most, his “decades of American contacts proved their worth and his peculiar mix of talents came into full play.”¹⁰¹ Lord Lothian helped change the American perception

⁹⁷ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 152.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 366.

⁹⁹ Priscilla Roberts, “Lord Lothian and the Atlantic World.” *The Historian*, Spring 2004, 66 (1): 126.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 125.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 126.

of the British and created friendly Anglo-American relations between the elite and the average citizen.

After the start of military conflict in Europe in 1939, Churchill realized that Americans would not listen to British propaganda because many Americans believed that the “scheming duplicitous British...tricked”¹⁰² the American public into getting involved in World War I. The British needed to “organize American public opinion in favour of aid to Britain”¹⁰³ without officially doing it themselves. The only practical option left to Churchill involved establishing a covert propaganda agency in the United States.

Canadian-born British intelligence agent William Stephenson served as the first director of the British Security Coordination and began his work by forming good relations with many American officials. He started by forming a close rapport with Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover. After only six months since the start of World War II in Europe, Stephenson and Hoover secured permission from Roosevelt to work toward “Anglo-American cooperation in the intelligence field.”¹⁰⁴ The two men “provided valuable assistance”¹⁰⁵ to one another. Stephenson then targeted William Donovan as a potential “intermediary *par excellence* for negotiations with the White House.”¹⁰⁶ As a prominent public figure, a highly successful lawyer, and Medal of Honor recipient, Donovan “exercised considerable influence in the inner councils of the Roosevelt Administration,”¹⁰⁷ especially

¹⁰² Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 51.

¹⁰³ Nigel West, Introduction from William Samuel Stephenson, *British Security Coordination: The Secret History of British Intelligence in the Americas, 1940-1945*. (New York: Fromm International, 1999), xxvii.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, xxvi.

¹⁰⁵ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 118.

¹⁰⁶ William Samuel, *The Secret History of British Intelligence in the Americas, 1940-1945* (New York: Fromm International, 1999), 8.

¹⁰⁷ Stephenson, *British Security Coordination*, 8.

with Roosevelt. Donovan became a staunch ally and advocate for American aid to the British to use against the Germans. Stephenson's relations proved paramount to the British Security Coordination's success.

After establishing powerful American allies, Stephenson turned the British Security Coordination's efforts toward "fostering the cause of intervention" in the United States, also known as "Political Warfare."¹⁰⁸ Again, Stephenson used his unique ability to form quick friendships to his advantage. These people included one of Roosevelt's international affairs speechwriter Robert Sherwood, popular Republican politician Wendell L. Willkie, General John J. Pershing, and, A. H. Sulzberger, the publisher of the *New York Times*.¹⁰⁹ From politics to the media, Stephenson hoped to use the British Security Coordination to combat the American isolationists and support the American interventionists. .

Agents of the British Security Coordination worked hard to uncover German activities in the United States and report them to the American public through their media contacts. The case of Doctor Gerhard Westrick serves as a perfect example. Westrick was a high-level Nazi agent assigned to enlist the help of Nazi sympathizers in the United States. His specific assignment involved bribing oil executives to support the Nazis.¹¹⁰ He entered the United States as a private citizen and began his assignment, but the British Security Coordination reported his true identity and activities to the *New York Herald Tribune*, which in turn published the story. The story spread all over the United States, and Westrick

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 16.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 16-20.

¹¹⁰ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 121.

fled the United States.¹¹¹ Outrage from the American public against Nazi Germany spread wherever newspapers printed their story.

Uncovering Nazi operations on American soil provided undeniable proof that Hitler had his eyes on the United States. Stephenson utilized the technique again and again; he uncovered damaging information of the Axis powers and “pass[ed] it along...to American news organizations.”¹¹² When undeniable proof did not exist, agents “forged documents” that “helped foment anti-Nazi sentiment.”¹¹³ Agents of the British Security Coordination hoped to “rip off the disguise of German-inspired subversive propaganda”¹¹⁴ and expose the Nazi threat to the American public. With help from interventionists, Stephenson and the British Security Coordination used propaganda to ignite rage against Hitler and the Nazis among the American public and generate greater support for the British.

In January of 1941, the Roosevelt Administration responded to the constant British pleas for increased assistance from the United States. For the next three months, British and American military officials conducted a series of secret meetings in Washington D.C. known as the ABC-1 conference. The Americans agreed to the ABC-1 Conference in order to explore the possibility of an Anglo-American alliance should the United States be forced to enter the war. During the conference, British representatives pushed for a decision on accepting the “European theatre as the vital theatre.”¹¹⁵ With Europe serving as the vital theater, the British also believed that the “general policy should therefore be to defeat

¹¹¹ Stephenson, *British Security Coordination*, 56-57.

¹¹² Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 120.

¹¹³ Ibid, 116.

¹¹⁴ Stephenson, *British Security Coordination*, 66.

¹¹⁵ Maurice Matloff, and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*. (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1999), 34.

Germany and Italy first, and then deal with Japan.”¹¹⁶ American military leaders favored the British suggestions and reported their opinion to Roosevelt. The ABC-1 Conference marked the first time British military officials met face to face with American officials in honestly pursuing an Anglo-American alliance.

On June 22, 1941, the Nazis commenced Hitler’s Operation BARBAROSSA and invaded the Soviet Union. At first, the Germans made swift advances into Soviet territory, and it appeared that Premier Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union would fall. The Soviets eventually held off the Nazi invasion short of Moscow. Stalin lacked the adequate supplies to arm the vast Soviet military and like the British, turned to the United States. Not only did the Soviets require arms, but money as well.¹¹⁷ Many Americans did not like the Soviets and mistrusted Stalin and his policies in the Soviet Union, but Roosevelt had a “hunch that backing the Soviets might be worth the gamble”¹¹⁸ and decided to help them with supplies. The Nazis imposed heavy casualties on the Red Army, and Stalin desired a second front to relieve pressure on his troops. Through their correspondence, Stalin made clear to Roosevelt the many sacrifices made by Soviet soldiers. In one letter, he warned Roosevelt of a likely pre-winter push by the Germans against Soviet lines, which already experienced heavy combat at the hands of the Nazis.¹¹⁹ The Soviet leader appealed for American military action against Germany in order to relieve pressure on his overburdened troops.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 34.

¹¹⁷ Susan Butler, *My Dear Mr. Stalin: The Complete Correspondence of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph V. Stalin* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005), 4.

¹¹⁸ Kimball, *Forged in War*, 90.

¹¹⁹ Joseph V. Stalin, “Letter, J. V. Stalin to F. Roosevelt, October 3, 1941,” in , *Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and the Presidents of the U.S.A. and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945*, ed. by Commission for the Publication of Diplomatic Documents (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), 13.

General Charles de Gaulle, leader of Free France, also made appeals to the United States to follow a Europe-first strategy. He believed “all was lost in Europe only until America could be induced to intervene in the war.”¹²⁰ The Free France government needed the military force and industrial might of the United States to move against Germany in order to reenter France. Unfortunately for de Gaulle, the Free France administration did not hold much political clout in the United States. Divisions among the Gaullist delegation and an anti-French attitude among many American politicians caused most French pleas to go unheard.¹²¹ Regardless, de Gaulle hoped for Americans to “turn the tide of the war”¹²² like they did in World War I. He encouraged his diplomatic representatives in the United States to continue to ask for American military action against Germany. Free France representatives complied and added another voice to the growing number of foreign dignitaries asking for the United States to intervene against Hitler and Nazi Germany.

Considering the appeals made by Britain, the Soviet Union and Free France, Roosevelt agreed to a conference with Churchill in August 1941 to discuss the current war. Both leaders brought their highest-level military advisors and discussed the implications of a Nazi-dominated Europe.¹²³ Churchill’s primary goal in negotiating with Roosevelt during the Atlantic Conference was to convince him to declare war against Germany.¹²⁴ His hopes rested on “further ensnaring the United States in a web of connections and

¹²⁰ Raoul Aglion, *Roosevelt and de Gaulle, Allies in Conflict: A Personal Memoir*. (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 32.

¹²¹ Ibid, 41-49.

¹²² Ibid, 37.

¹²³ Langley, Loewenheim and Jonas, eds., *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 153.

¹²⁴ United States Department of State, "The Atlantic Conference & Charter, 1941." 1937 – 1945 Milestones - Office of the Historian.

commitments”¹²⁵ designed to create conflict between the United States and Germany.

Constant German victories in Europe and the massive barrage by German bombers during the Battle of Britain devastated the British and destroyed major portions of the urban centers on the British Isle. Many citizens died, but the British held strong. The British people desperately needed a morale boost, and Churchill hoped to provide it through American intervention.

Roosevelt refused Churchill’s suggestion, but the resulting Atlantic Charter cemented the Anglo-American alliance and hinted at the United States entering the war against Hitler and the Nazis. In fact, a telegram drafted by Roosevelt and Churchill about the Atlantic Charter mentioned the “dangers to world civilization arising from the policies of military domination by conquest upon which the Hitlerite Government of Germany and other Governments associated therewith have embarked.”¹²⁶ The only enemy addressed by name in the telegram was Germany. Roosevelt and Churchill did not even mention the Japanese Empire. Churchill may have failed to bring the United States into the war, but he achieved minor success by influencing Roosevelt to declare Hitler as the primary enemy.

Pearl Harbor formally brought the United States into World War II. Three days later, Hitler led Germany in a declaration of war against the United States and solved another question on how to convince the United States to also fight Germany. Japan and Germany officially made the decision for the United States. Once the United States was engaging in

¹²⁵ Kimball, *Forged In War*, 102.

¹²⁶ Winston S. Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Original Draft Telegram Announcing the Results of the Atlantic Conference, August 14, 1941” from Archivists of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum, *Significant Documents Collection*, Series 1, Box 1, Document 33, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/collections/franklin/?p=collections/findingaid&id=510>.

military action, the British, Soviets and Free France needed to convince the United States that Germany needed to be forced into surrender first.

Immediately after Pearl Harbor, Churchill asked for a conference with Roosevelt. The Japanese finally forced the United States into the war, but Churchill feared the United States might adopt a Pacific-first strategy.¹²⁷ Roosevelt agreed to a conference and the two leaders and their advisers all met in Washington D.C. between December 1941 and January 1942 to discuss the American-British grand strategy in the ARCADIA Conference. Again, Churchill exerted his influence on Roosevelt and stayed in the White House for nearly three weeks straight.¹²⁸

The talks turned in favor of the British and their hope for the United States agreeing to a Europe-first strategy came to fruition. The British and Americans “agreed that Germany was the predominant member of the Axis powers and consequently the Atlantic and European area was considered to be the decisive theatre.”¹²⁹ This served as the first time the United States publically and officially committed to a Europe-first strategy in the war. The conferees then discussed the importance of supporting Stalin and the Soviet Union with as much materiel as possible to keep the Germans occupied in the eastern front. British and Americans leaders also debated the timing of an invasion of the European continent. Everyone decided that an invasion of the European continent by British and American military forces seemed unlikely at the time and that “a return to the Continent”¹³⁰ appeared more feasible in 1943. Throughout his time in Washington, Churchill promoted “a

¹²⁷ Kimball, *Forged In War*, 123.

¹²⁸ Langley, Loewenheim and Jonas, *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 172.

¹²⁹ United States Department of State, *FRUS: The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943*, Volume II (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1968), 214.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 216.

series of invasions of German-held Europe starting in 1943”¹³¹ in order to keep the Americans committed to a Europe-first strategy. Various invasion locations show up in the ARCADIA Conference memorandum such as the Balkans, Italy and Western Europe, but the Allies did not decide on an actual location at that time.

Though the Allies tentatively agreed to a Europe-first strategy in 1941, questions complicated its development. These questions included how and to whom resources should be allocated, which country’s personnel would be in command and most importantly, where should the counterattack against Germany begin. Again, every nation fought for their own country’s interests, which resulted in considerable tension. This tension led to constant revisions to the Europe-first strategy, and sometimes the tension seemed likely to cause the United States to revert to a Pacific-first strategy.

After deciding on a Europe-first strategy at the ARCADIA Conference, the question of where to invade the continent of Europe dominated the next series of talks between the United States and other Allies. Stalin and his Soviet advisers badly wanted a second front opened in Western Europe as early as 1942. People’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov repeatedly explained that the difficulties of establishing another front in Western Europe would “not be any less in 1943.”¹³² He said that the Soviet Union held a solid line against the Germans on the eastern front and the opportune time for the rest of the Allies to attack was sometime in 1942. Roosevelt instructed Molotov on May 30, 1942 to tell Stalin that American troops would land on the European continent in 1942 and create a second front.

¹³¹ Kimball, *Forged In War*, 127.

¹³² United States Department of State, *FRUS: 1942: Europe*, Volume III (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 577.

The next day, however, Roosevelt revised his earlier declaration and asked Molotov to consider receiving reduced military aid from the United States in order to bolster troops and supplies in England for a 1942 Channel crossing into Nazi-occupied France. The United States did not possess enough transport ships to move all the men and supplies needed to continue Soviet aid at current levels and prepare for a massive invasion. Molotov responded with no enthusiasm and questioned whether the United States intended on opening another front in 1942. He insisted “the second front would be stronger if the first front stood fast.”¹³³ Again, Roosevelt promised Stalin and the Soviet Union that the Americans, along with British support, would establish a second front in Western Europe.

Churchill strongly opposed that proposal. A cross-Channel landing involved putting thousands of British soldiers at risk, and Britain already had lost an entire generation in World War I. Invading through France did not meet the British objectives of saving their Middle Eastern and Balkan interests as well. On July 8, 1942, Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff officially vetoed any plan to invade the European continent across the Channel by the end of 1942. The Prime Minister reasoned that not one of his military commanders believed an Allied invasion of France to be “a practicable operation in 1942.”¹³⁴ He also explained that any attempt at such an assault in 1942 would ruin any possibility of mounting a well-organized large-scale attack against the European continent in 1943.

Another idea Churchill suggested in his letter to Roosevelt and his advisers was Operation GYMNAST. Operation GYMNAST, which became known as Operation TORCH,

¹³³ Ibid, 583.

¹³⁴ Warren Kimball, *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 520.

involved an Allied invasion of French North Africa and a push westward in order to remove the Germans from the African continent. This set the stage for a European invasion up through what Churchill called “the soft underbelly of Europe,” better known as Italy. Such an attack technically created the second front Stalin and the Soviet Union desperately needed. Hitler would need to divert important resources and manpower from the eastern front to protect Italy. An invasion through Italy might also reduce British casualties. Churchill called the plan “the safest and most fruitful stroke that can be delivered this autumn.”¹³⁵

Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to the British plan for an Allied invasion of French North Africa. The Allied attack against French North Africa succeeded in expelling Axis forces from North Africa, but it took longer than expected. The war in the Pacific started to take attention away from Europe and the United States seemed likely to give up on the Europe-first strategy. Stalin reported his growing exasperation with the lack of commitment to opening a Western European front. He “definitely disapproved” of the Americans thinking about launching an all- out attack against the Japanese because it would “divert material and force”¹³⁶ from the European theater. General Hurley relayed that Stalin “stressed the paramount importance of the defeat of Hitler first.”¹³⁷ The Allies needed the Soviet Union to stay in the fight against Germany, and a Pacific-first strategy did nothing to benefit the Soviets.

After securing North Africa, questions resurfaced on where to attack next. The Allies knew the next attack required invading Europe in order to save the Soviets. British and

¹³⁵ Ibid, 520.

¹³⁶ Patrick J. Hurley, “Cable from General Hurley to FDR, November 15, 1942,” in Butler, *My Dear Mr. Stalin*, 94.

¹³⁷ Hurley, “Cable from General Hurley to FDR, November 15, 1942,” Doc. 59, 94.

American leaders debated over future strategy at the Casablanca Conference in January of 1943. Stalin did not make it to the conference because of developments along the eastern front. After long hours of discussion, Roosevelt agreed to the British plan for a sweep northward through Italy instead of a mass landing in France. An invasion across the Channel would take too long to plan and execute, and Roosevelt demanded more immediate military action against Germany. The plan named Operation HUSKY called for the “occupation of Sicily with the object of diverting German pressure from the Russian front.”¹³⁸ British and American leaders finalized their war strategy and prepared for the attack on Germany and Italian occupied Sicily.

Because British and American forces took their time in assembling the necessary materials and personnel for Operation HUSKY, the Soviets grew more and more impatient. Churchill and Roosevelt had promised Stalin a second front in Europe in 1943, but no second front yet existed. Thousands of Red Army soldiers and Soviet civilians died in fierce battle with the Germans everyday, and the Soviets required some relief. The Soviets started to mistrust the intentions of the Americans and British and feared that they already abandoned a Europe-first strategy.

In June 1943, Stalin sent a stern message to his counterparts reminding them of their promise to open a second front. Stalin and the Soviets felt insulted and betrayed that the British and Americans decided to move back the date of the European invasion at a conference in Washington D.C. “without Soviet participation and without inviting its

¹³⁸ United States Department of State, *FRUS: Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943*, Volume III (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1968), 775.

representatives.”¹³⁹ In the message, Stalin reminded Roosevelt that the Allies moved back opening a second front in Europe from the original promise of 1942 to 1944.¹⁴⁰ The Soviets felt like the other Allies did not seem to understand or did not care about the direness of the Soviet situation. The Soviets begged for a second front in Europe, but the Americans and British kept making empty promises. The Allied nations agreed to a Europe-first strategy, but the Soviets believed they were the only ones putting the strategy into action. The Allies needed to be able to trust the other nations and their leaders in the alliance and support each other to beat the might of the Axis powers.

Other Allies started to feel the pressure as well. Countries such as Australia and New Zealand “demanded a return of their forces...and a reversal of the Europe-first strategy.”¹⁴¹ China pleaded for more aid and warned the Allies of a Chinese “collapse or separate peace.”¹⁴² These countries sacrificed protecting their own nations and peoples for the good of the larger Alliance. To them, the Europe-first strategy failed or took too long to complete. Japan took advantage of the Allied preoccupation with Germany and pushed forward with their plans to dominate the Pacific. The Pacific Allies needed help against Japan and swiftly. The Allies needed to take action and focus most of their energies on one theater of the war and break up the Axis powers one by one.

¹³⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., *Correspondence Between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and the Presidents of the U.S.A. and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945*), 76.

¹⁴⁰ Joseph Stalin, “Letter, Joseph Stalin to FDR re: Second Front, June 11, 1943,” from Archivists of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum, *Significant Documents Collection*, Series 1, Box 1, Document 55, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/collections/franklin/?p=collections/findingaid&id=510>.

¹⁴¹ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 67.

¹⁴² Ibid.

After many conferences and countless debates, the British, Soviets and Free French succeeded in convincing the United States to adopt a Europe-first strategy. They utilized many different tactics and methods to persuade Roosevelt and the American public. They used their closer diplomatic ties to woo American officials to their side. They also used the political power of their military power to influence the United States. The arguments made by the pro- Europe countries appealed to American leaders and made the most sense to Roosevelt. Ultimately, the European powers opposing Hitler exerted crucial influence over Roosevelt's decision to move the United States toward a Europe-first strategy in World War II.

Military Influence

Military advisers hold some of most influential positions in terms of developing military strategy. The generals and admirals use their training and experiences to develop the different options that the military will use in various engagements and wars. No one in the government better understands how to win a war than the people who command military forces. They know what variables to consider when assessing enemies, including number of soldiers, technology, resources tactics and geography. The lives of their men and the future of their country depend on their capabilities to assess potential threats and create the best strategies accordingly. In the United States, the President relies heavily on the advice of high-ranking military officials from each branch of the military. Roosevelt constantly consulted with his advisers and found that the heads of the United States Army and United States Navy believed in different strategies for the United States to follow in order to win World War II. Ultimately, the President followed the advice of the majority of

his military advisors and decided on “the most important single strategic concept of the war”¹⁴³ by choosing a Europe-first strategy in World War II.

After the end of World War I, government and military officials wanted a cooperative effort by American military leaders to analyze current and potential threats to American security. As a result, representatives from the Army and Navy formed the Joint Board and the advisory Joint Planning Committee. They set to work and established strategies based on various threats known as the Color Plans. As early as the 1920s, the Joint Board recognized Japan as the most “probable enemy”¹⁴⁴ of the United States and created War Plan ORANGE. American military strategists labeled the Japanese Empire as a major threat before they even thought to include Germany in their plans. Germany suffered immensely under the Treaty of Versailles and was stripped of its military capabilities. At the time, the Joint Board did not recognize any European nation as an immediate threat because of the ongoing political turmoil.

One of the most important features of the Color Plans involved one European nation, Great Britain. Though highly unlikely, the military planners of the Joint Board created a strategy based on a war between the United States and an alliance between Great Britain and Japan known as Plan ORANGE-RED. Plan ORANGE-RED called for American forces to “stand on the defensive in the Pacific”¹⁴⁵ and allocate a majority of military force and resources to the Atlantic Ocean. The Joint Board agreed that the “vital areas of the United States were located in the northeast”¹⁴⁶ and needed protective priority. This strategy was

¹⁴³ Louis Morton, *Germany First: The Basic Concept of Allied Strategy in World War II*. (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1990), 11.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 14.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 17.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 17.

very similar to the one the United States adopted during World War II, with the replacement of Great Britain with Germany. Plan ORANGE-RED laid the foundation for placing more strategic importance on the Atlantic Ocean and Europe over the Pacific Ocean and Asia.

Military leaders first created the Color Plans at a time when Germany posed no threat to the United States. But Hitler's rise to power swiftly changed Germany's status in the world and caused the United States to take a cautionary interest in German military development. The United States sent Colonel Truman Smith to Berlin as a military attaché and ordered him to report on German rearmament.¹⁴⁷ Smith had already been stationed in Germany in the 1920s and had the most experience with Germany and its military. Smith's expertise on the German military and his findings helped convince American military personnel to view Germany as a serious threat to the United States.

Throughout his post as the military attaché to Germany, Smith discovered the alarming growing power of the German military. Once in Berlin in 1935, Smith observed that Hitler no longer considered Germany "bound by the provisions of the Versailles Treaty."¹⁴⁸ The Nazis dedication to rearmament allowed Germany to rapidly recover economically and develop vast industrial capabilities. The swift economic transformation of Germany opened up opportunities for the Nazis to procure the commodities necessary to wage a major war. Smith reported on "specific gains in areas such as iron, gasoline, and oil" and on Germany's concentration on developing "synthetic substitutes."¹⁴⁹ Hitler hoped to

¹⁴⁷ Henry G. Gole, *Exposing the Third Reich: Colonel Truman Smith in Hitler's Germany* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 121.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 167.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 171.

create a self-sustaining German economy to support his future war.¹⁵⁰ The idea of a self-sustaining Germany greatly concerned Smith and other American military officials. Japan relied on American oil to operate its modern military, which put the Japanese military at the mercy of American trade. Germany could launch and maintain a massive war with its own resources, which helped put Germany ahead of Japan as a major threat.

In 1936, Smith expressed special concern over the impressive military might of the German Air Force known as the Luftwaffe. He concluded that the “German aircraft industry had a productive capacity two and one half times of that of either Great Britain or the United States.”¹⁵¹ Smith wrote to Colonel Charles Lindbergh and invited him to come to Berlin and confirm his assessment of the Luftwaffe. In his letter, Smith stressed the “high patriotic benefit”¹⁵² of Lindbergh’s examination of German air power. Lindbergh agreed and along with Smith took an extensive tour of German air facilities. Smith chronicled their tour in his diary and wrote that they agreed, “German aviation...was coming of age.”¹⁵³

Hitler’s colossal rearmament program caused Smith to report that Germany clearly intended to start a war in Europe and possibly more. The Nazis accumulated the required resources to launch major military campaigns and developed new technologies to create a more self-reliant economy. The German Army expanded quickly and underwent quality training. The Luftwaffe already proved to be a formidable force, with Hitler demanding continued improvements and additions every year. Soon, the Luftwaffe became the dominant air power in Europe, and possibly the world. If the United States did not begin to

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 171.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, *Exposing the Third Reich*, 168.

¹⁵² Truman Smith, “Letter, Truman Smith to Charles Lindbergh, May 25, 1936,” in Robert Hessen, *Berlin Alert: The Memoirs and Reports of Truman Smith* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1984), 89.

¹⁵³ Truman Smith, “Diary Entry, July 27, 1936,” Ibid, 97.

rearm as well, Germany could soon surpass American military power and prove to be the biggest threat to American security.

As events unfolded in the late 1930s and new information came in from Europe and Asia, the Joint Board realized they needed to revise Plan ORANGE. The global situation had changed drastically from the 1920s, and new threats existed to American security. Japan still stood as the most likely adversary but Germany now served as a likely enemy as well because of the Axis Alliance. A war with one member might result in a war with both. Germany also looked likely to replace Japan as the most powerful military threat to American security.

A split started to develop in the Joint Board between the Army representatives and the Navy representatives in the mid 1930s. War in Asia resulted in the Navy taking the lead in military leadership. War in Europe resulted in the Army assuming command. A “classic example of bureaucratic politics”¹⁵⁴ divided the Joint Board along service lines and foreshadowed future arguments to come over war strategy. As of February 1938, the Navy had the upper hand, and the revised Plan ORANGE called for a concentration on the Pacific, while remaining ready for war in the Atlantic.¹⁵⁵ The Army won a small victory in the revision because of the additional focus on Europe. Smith’s reports fueled speculation that Germany might soon replace Japan as the biggest threat to American security. Although Japan appeared as the most immediate threat, American military planners continued to fear an attack from Europe.

Nine months later, Roosevelt requested that his military advisers go back to the drawing board and develop strategic plans in case of war between the United States and

¹⁵⁴ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 8.

¹⁵⁵ Morton, *Germany First*, 19-20.

Germany or Japan or both. Japan no longer stood as the only immediate threat to American security. Roosevelt recognized the increasingly aggressive policies of Germany and Japan and acknowledged potential conflicts between their interests and American interests.¹⁵⁶ The Joint Planning Committee assembled a report on the strategic concerns of the United States should war occur against Germany or Japan. Even Latin America emerged as a major concern. Contrary to the Monroe Doctrine, all three Axis powers, especially Germany, started to expand their presence and influence there. ¹⁵⁷

With the information gathered from the Joint Planning Committee report, military leaders produced the RAINBOW Plans for Roosevelt. The RAINBOW Plans accounted for five different possible war scenarios. A majority of the plans called for the defense of the Western Hemisphere against Axis nations attempting to violate the Monroe Doctrine, but two plans called for immediate offensive action. RAINBOW 2 involved working with Great Britain and France with “immediate offensive operations across the Pacific.”¹⁵⁸ RAINBOW 5 called for cooperation with Great Britain and France again, but with “early projection of U.S. forces to the eastern Atlantic” and the “defeat of Germany and Italy.”¹⁵⁹ RAINBOW 5 followed the example of Plan ORANGE-RED and recognized Europe as the primary theater of war. A general consensus among the members of the Joint Planning Committee recognized Europe served more of the United States vital interests. If the Axis powers attacked simultaneously, Germany served as the biggest threat and needed to be taken out first. Unfortunately, the RAINBOW Plans “did not completely satisfy the Army or the

¹⁵⁶ Morton, *Germany First*, 21.

¹⁵⁷ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 18.

¹⁵⁸ Morton, *Germany First*, 24.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 24.

Navy.”¹⁶⁰ The RAINBOW Plans needed to be revised and changed, but with no actual immediate threats to American security, Roosevelt and his military advisers left the RAINBOW Plans alone.

The fall of France in 1940 and other developments in Europe and Asia pushed Roosevelt’s military advisers back into immediate action. Hitler controlled most of Europe, and the United States feared the Nazis desired to expand beyond the European continent. France’s navy no longer stood in the way of German submarines. In fact, American military strategists “had to contend with the possibility that Germany would gain control of the French Fleet.”¹⁶¹ This would leave the British navy alone to combat German naval power in the Atlantic.

Many government and military officials already expressed concern about “German infiltration of Central and South America” but the concern intensified in 1940 because of “Germany’s many military and trade missions in the region.”¹⁶² They believed “Germany might acquire colonies and allies in the Western Hemisphere.”¹⁶³ A German-controlled South America posed many threats to American security, especially concerning the Panama Canal. General George Marshall expressed serious warnings of a German “strike at the Panama Canal,”¹⁶⁴ since the Canal served as the lifeline of the two-ocean navy. Losing control of the Panama Canal would stifle American naval movement and hinder American trade.

¹⁶⁰ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 19.

¹⁶¹ Peter Mansoor, “US Grand Strategy in the Second World War,” from Williamson Murray and Richard Sinnreich, *Successful Strategies: Triumphant in War and Peace from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 319.

¹⁶² Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 99.

¹⁶³ Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 12.

¹⁶⁴ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 201.

With a renewed focus on Germany as a major potential enemy, Admiral Harold Stark revised the Navy's war plans. In November of 1940, Stark produced the new plans now known as Plan DOG. Plan DOG laid the foundation for future American war strategy in World War II. Similar to the RAINBOW Plans, Plan DOG explored multiple military scenarios involving the United States fighting Japan, Germany or all the Axis powers at once. What set Plan DOG apart is Stark's recognition that war with one Axis power would more than likely lead to war with all the Axis powers. The United States did not possess the military capabilities to launch two offensive fronts in separate parts of the world. The United States needed to place priority on one theater of war.

In such an event, Stark gave his firm opinion in favor of pursuing a Europe-first strategy in what he called Alternative D. Alternative D called for the United States to "prepare, in case of war, for great land operations across the Atlantic."¹⁶⁵ Such preparations consumed vast amounts of resources, resulting in the United States possessing the ability to fight an offensive battle in only one theater at a time. Stark stated that victory in Europe against Germany would "likely to be the most fruitful for the United States"¹⁶⁶ in defeating the Axis powers as a whole. According to his research, Stark believed defeating Germany first served American interests more effectively than any of the other alternatives.

As part of his recommendation in Plan DOG, Stark provided two main arguments for a Europe-first strategy. First, Stark identified Hitler and the Nazis as the leader and most powerful of the Axis powers. The German war machine proved its strength and effectiveness through its European *blitzkrieg*. If the United States allowed Hitler to

¹⁶⁵ Matloff, and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 26.

¹⁶⁶ Harold Stark, "Plan DOG Memorandum, November 12, 1940" from Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum, *Safe Files*, Box 4, Navy Department "Plan DOG" Index, 24.

strengthen his hold over Europe by pursuing a Pacific-first strategy, the chances for an American victory in Europe plummeted. In case of war, the United States needed to focus “full national offensive strength...in a single direction.”¹⁶⁷ For Stark, that single direction pointed to Berlin.

The second reason involved allies. Stark stressed the strategic importance of protecting potential American allies from Germany. The United States could not win a two-front war alone, and almost all of America’s potential allies were already under Nazi control or appeared ready to fall to the Germans. Plan Dog called for “a Germany- first approach in conjunction with England,”¹⁶⁸ but such a plan could not exist without a free England. In fact, a majority of Stark’s military strategy in Plan DOG involved keeping Britain in the fight against Germany.¹⁶⁹ In order to have allies against Japan, the United States needed to place priority on supporting “Great Britain against its major enemy,”¹⁷⁰ which made Germany the United States major enemy. Stark also wanted to ensure that the United States did not have to fight the Japanese alone in the future. Once Germany fell to the Allies, the United States could pursue an active war against Japan with help from the British and the Soviets.

Originally, Secretary of War Henry Stimson supported a strong stance against Japan. He advised Roosevelt to focus on the Pacific and recognize Japanese aggression as more of an immediate threat to the United States. Growing German power and Stark’s Plan DOG memorandum caused him to change his opinion. He “agreed with the chiefs”¹⁷¹ that

¹⁶⁷ Stark, “Plan Dig Memorandum,” 24.

¹⁶⁸ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 29.

¹⁶⁹ Stark, “Plan Dig Memorandum,” 2-26.

¹⁷⁰ Matloff, and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 27.

¹⁷¹ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 35.

Germany threatened American security more than Japan. Thereafter, Stimson advocated increasingly aggressive measures against the Nazis. One of these measures included American naval escorts of British ships operating under the Lend-Lease Act. Along with Stark, he “proved to be the idea’s most relentless advocate.”¹⁷² He called for “additional civil-military coordination”¹⁷³ in order to settle on a final Europe-first strategy for war.

In 1941, American military leaders continued to garner support for a Europe-first strategy. A secret meeting between American military officials and British military officials known as the ABC-1 Conference generated mutual support for a Europe-first strategy. At the ABC-1 conference, the delegation agreed that an Anglo-American alliance’s “main effort would be against Germany rather than Japan,”¹⁷⁴ which aligned with the outline of RAINBOW 5. After the secret ABC-1 Conference, the United States military made moves towards putting RAINBOW 5 into action. With “the eyes of American strategists...focused on the Atlantic,”¹⁷⁵ Marshall and Stimson oversaw preparations for transitioning from a Pacific orientation to the Europe orientation of RAINBOW 5. These preparations included massive mobilization efforts in the United States in order to prepare the Army’s European invasion force required under RAINBOW 5.¹⁷⁶

Pearl Harbor and the declarations of war against the United States by Japan and Germany definitely answered the questions on which members of the Axis powers the United States would fight in the war. The United States faced a two-front war and a majority of the RAINBOW Plans no longer applied. Many of the United States military

¹⁷² Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 292.

¹⁷³ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 37.

¹⁷⁴ Olson, *Those Angry Days*, 301.

¹⁷⁵ Morton, *Germany First*, 47.

¹⁷⁶ Matloff, and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 47.

leaders decided to turn to RAINBOW 5 and Stark's Plan DOG, but the division along Army and Navy lines reappeared in the ongoing strategy debates. The tentative agreement between the Army and Navy on a Europe-first strategy disintegrated. The leaders of the two branches of the United States military split mostly along service lines with the Army preferring a Europe-first strategy and the Navy favoring a Pacific-first strategy. Some leaders held different opinions, such as General Douglas MacArthur and Stark, but most of the leaders stayed loyal to the other service heads.

Prestige served as one of the reasons for the stark difference in opinion between the Army and Navy. In Europe, the Army clearly needed to be in control because a war against Germany required a massive land invasion. The Army would receive all the praise and press attention back in the United States. This would help cement their position of power in the White House. In the Pacific Theater, the Navy needed to take the reins because almost every battle would either be at sea or involve naval bombardment followed by United States Marines charging the beach. This would result in the Navy earning increased admiration among the American public and provide the Navy with the rare opportunity to "replace Army influence in the White House with that of the Navy."¹⁷⁷ Neither branch of the military wanted the other to gain the upper hand and win more favor with the American public and more importantly the White House.

An eagerness for revenge against the Japanese by the Navy was another reason for the split in opinion over strategy. The Navy wanted the United States to follow a Pacific-first strategy in order to engage the Imperial Navy of Japan as soon as possible. The United States Navy lost many good sailors and ships at Pearl Harbor. "Desirous of revenge for

¹⁷⁷ Mark Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front: American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 162.

Pearl Harbor,”¹⁷⁸ the survivors and the rest of the Navy craved an opportunity to avenge their comrades’ deaths. Historian Mark Stoler suggests that the United States Navy demanded “further action in the Pacific,”¹⁷⁹ despite of the Roosevelt Administration’s decision to concentrate on Hitler, Nazi Germany and Europe. The Europe-first strategy needed to be finalized as quickly as possible in order to keep the United States Navy from pushing harder for more action against Japan in the Pacific.

The major players in deciding American military strategy stood divided after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the Japanese expulsion of American troops from the Philippines. Many of the generals and admirals of the United States military held complicated views on which war strategy best suited American interests. Beyond prestige and revenge, American military leaders could not agree on which Axis power threatened the United States the most and deserved priority. In order to reach a resolution on American military strategy and mirror the British Imperial General Staff, the United States military replaced the weak Joint Board with a more organized group of commanders known as the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Created in 1942, the Joint Chiefs of Staff was comprised of Marshall, United States Army Air Forces Chief General Henry Arnold, United States Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Ernest King and Admiral William Leahy. They served as the main strategists for the United States and possessed significant influence on Roosevelt’s war decisions.¹⁸⁰ Stark, MacArthur and General Dwight D. Eisenhower, also influenced American strategic decisions. Together, these seven men played some of the most pivotal

¹⁷⁸ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 68.

¹⁷⁹ Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front*, 162.

¹⁸⁰ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 65.

roles in helping Roosevelt determine that the United States must pursue a Europe-first strategy in World War II.

Marshall definitely held the most sway with Roosevelt. He earned “the esteem of Roosevelt”¹⁸¹ and as the Chief of Staff of the Army, talked with him almost daily. Marshall was committed to the Europe-first strategy since before the war. In fact, when he first became the Chief of Staff of the Army in 1939, he outlined a series of measures the Army needed to take “upon the outbreak of a war in Europe,”¹⁸² and he aimed at Germany.

A major part of Marshall’s strategy required a large Allied invasion of northwestern Europe to liberate France and relieve Russia in the east. Only a massive attack in Western Europe could bring down the Germans, save American allies, and eventually defeat all the Axis powers. Marshall had little patience for the British-planned Operation GYMNAST and believed it “would be both indecisive and a heavy drain on our resources.”¹⁸³ He believed so strongly in a Europe-first strategy that he issued a memorandum to Roosevelt in 1942. In the memorandum, Marshall stated that unless the United States pursued plans involving large-scale invasions of Europe, then “we should turn to the Pacific and strike decisively against Japan.”¹⁸⁴ A Europe-first strategy was best, but Marshall tired of the Allies’ indecision. Roosevelt rejected Marshall’s suggestion, but understood his standpoint. This memorandum supported Operation BOLERO, which called for a buildup of supplies and

¹⁸¹ Clayton James, *A Time For Giants: Politics of the American High Command in World War II* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1987), 23.

¹⁸² Mark Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1991), 155.

¹⁸³ George Marshall and Ernest King, *Admiral Ernest J. King and General George C. Marshall Respond with a "Pacific-First" Proposal, July 10, 1942* (National Archives and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, 1942), 1.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

men in England.¹⁸⁵ Operation BOLERO would allow a grand Channel crossing into German occupied France by Allied forces, which eventually turned into Operation OVERLORD.

Arnold's expertise involved air power, which caused him to view Germany as the most powerful member of the Axis Power. As the head of the Army Air Forces, Arnold understood the strategic importance of air superiority. He personally witnessed the power of the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain in London: "A fire here, another there, they seem to cover as much as a city block."¹⁸⁶ After his experiences in England, Arnold realized the United States needed to build a powerful air force. He helped change Roosevelt's mind about air power and advised him to greatly expand the Army Air Forces. Known for his "driving energy,"¹⁸⁷ he helped develop the United States Army Air Forces into a rival force to the Luftwaffe. Historian and author Eric Larrabee agrees and mentions that Arnold "fathered the American air force"¹⁸⁸ in response to Germany's growing power.

Along with establishing the United States as a formidable air power, Arnold served as a staunch supporter of a Europe-first strategy, a conviction that put him into conflict with King. Arnold firmly believed that the United States needed to save the British and Soviets from the Nazis,¹⁸⁹ because there was no hope of winning the war alone. King held

¹⁸⁵ Mansoor, "US Grand Strategy in the Second World War," 333.

¹⁸⁶ Henry Arnold, "Diary Entry, Tuesday, April 15, 1941" from John W. Huston, *American Airpower Comes of Age: General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold's World War II Diaries* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2001), 144

¹⁸⁷ Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), 209.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 209.

¹⁸⁹ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 94.

little regard for Arnold and viewed him as unqualified for his position.¹⁹⁰ Arnold refused to be pushed around by King and held firm to his defense of a Europe-first strategy.

King turned out to be an extremely vocal leader in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He believed Japan stood as the largest threat to American security and needed to be dealt with immediately. In 1942, King begged for more troops and ships in the Pacific in order to not only “stem the Japanese advance but also to launch counterattacks.”¹⁹¹ A strong thirst for revenge along with a racist attitude towards the Japanese drove King in his quest to end Japanese aggression in the Pacific.¹⁹² In a 1942 memorandum to Roosevelt, King insisted that the United States needed to save Australia and New Zealand from the Japanese because of the “repercussions among the non-white races of the world.”¹⁹³ Roosevelt, however, largely ignored King’s plea.

After Marshall, Leahy was one of Roosevelt’s closest friends and confidants. The two met prior to World War I and worked together in the United States Navy. During Roosevelt’s second term, they worked together as the United States military “began to gird for war.”¹⁹⁴ Leahy retired in 1939, but Roosevelt called him back into service during World War II. He appointed Leahy as the Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief. Leahy did not actively press for a Europe-first or a Pacific-first strategy, but mainly served as a “stabilizing influence to sessions of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.”¹⁹⁵ He worked especially well as “an effective mediator of differences of opinion that arose between Marshall and

¹⁹⁰ David Rigby, *Allied Master Strategists: The Combined Chiefs of Staff in World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 30.

¹⁹¹ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 68.

¹⁹² Ibid, 68.

¹⁹³ Thomas B. Buell, *Master of Seapower: A Biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 532.

¹⁹⁴ James, *A Time for Giants*, 44.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 49.

King.”¹⁹⁶ Everyone on the Combined Chiefs of Staff “respected him highly as the president’s personal spokesman,”¹⁹⁷ including foreign military officials. When forced to share his opinion, however, Leahy tended to support a Pacific-first strategy.¹⁹⁸ Roosevelt appreciated the friendship and hard work of Leahy throughout World War II. Though extremely influential with Roosevelt, Leahy’s position required him to serve as less of a strategist and as more of a mediator.

Stark already played a large role in the adoption of a Europe-first strategy. In his 1940 Plan DOW memorandum to Roosevelt, Stark fully committed to tackling the German problem before going on the offensive against Japan. He realized “the continued existence of the British Empire”¹⁹⁹ was absolutely vital to the security of the United States and one of the most important aspects of any United States war plan. After the United States officially entered the war, Stark remained a vocal advocate of a Europe-first strategy. Roosevelt promoted Stark to his position as Chief of Naval Operations and placed great trust in Stark’s decision-making skills.²⁰⁰ Throughout the ARCADIA Conference in late December 1941, Stark defended the idea of a Europe-first strategy against his American peers.²⁰¹ He worked in collaboration with British military officials to convince other American officers that Germany needed to be dealt with first.

MacArthur proved to be a just as loud or even louder leader than King. He greatly desired a Pacific-first strategy because he made a vow to return to the Philippines and

¹⁹⁶ Rigby, *Allied Master Strategists*, 33.

¹⁹⁷ James, *A Time for Giants*, 49.

¹⁹⁸ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 97.

¹⁹⁹ Harold Stark, *The Stark Memorandum, November 1940* (Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, 1940), 1.

²⁰⁰ B. Mitchell Simpson, *Admiral Harold R. Stark: Architect of Victory, 1939-1945* (Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 2.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 120.

liberate it from the Japanese. MacArthur cared deeply about his reputation and wanted to avenge his earlier defeat at the hands of the Japanese. He also spent most of his military career in the Pacific and knew that he would be most useful in the Pacific Theater of World War II. He repeatedly stressed “the importance of the Pacific”²⁰² to his superiors, especially Roosevelt. MacArthur hated being told no and often overstepped his boundaries as a military man. This resulted in constant criticism from people of higher authority, especially Roosevelt. One incident over U.S. Army budget cuts resulted in Roosevelt turning “livid with rage”²⁰³ and MacArthur offering his resignation. Roosevelt did not fire MacArthur, but the incident showed MacArthur’s arrogant obsession with a Pacific-first strategy.

Eisenhower shared Marshall’s commitment to a Europe-first strategy and actively fought for American military action against Germany. He served under MacArthur in the Philippines and understood fairly well the threat the Japanese Imperial Military posed to American interests in the Pacific, but he still viewed Germany as the larger threat. In fact, Eisenhower wrote “the basic strategy of a European war”²⁰⁴ in 1942 at the request of Marshall. From a logistical point of view, a Europe-first strategy made more sense than a Pacific-first strategy. He concluded that it would take “three to four times as many ships to transport and maintain a force in the Pacific as across the Atlantic.”²⁰⁵ By the time the United States developed the logistical capability to win in the Pacific, the Soviets and possibly the British may already have fallen to the Germans, which eliminated practically all of the United States’ allies.

²⁰² Larrabee, *Commander in Chief*, 311.

²⁰³ Ibid, 307.

²⁰⁴ Larrabee, *Commander in Chief*, 419.

²⁰⁵ Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1991), 148.

Germany's status as the most powerful of the Axis powers served as another reason for Eisenhower's desire to eliminate the Nazis first. With a majority of Allied military power already in Europe, the Allies could launch a greater attack on Germany than on Japan.²⁰⁶ Removing the Germans from the war created an opportunity to redirect all of the Allies' military might against Japan in the future. The strategy for war in Europe that Eisenhower wrote greatly helped Roosevelt make the decision to pick Eisenhower as the Supreme Commander of Allied forces in the European Theater of World War II. Marshall and Roosevelt valued Eisenhower's quick mind and trusted him to make the proper decisions necessary to defeat Nazi Germany and win the war in Europe.

Overall, a majority of the military advisors of the United States Army and United States Navy supported a Europe-first strategy over a Pacific-first strategy. Since Germany began to rearm in the 1930s, American military personnel cautiously watched Hitler and his military ambitions. A Nazi-dominated Europe strategically hurt the United States more than a Japanese-dominated Pacific. Marshall, Arnold, Stark and Eisenhower realized the strategic importance of saving American allies from the clutches of Hitler and his Nazi war machine. King, Leahy and MacArthur advocated for a Pacific-first strategy, but Roosevelt believed that they allowed their personal emotions and feelings to cloud their judgment. Extensive research from the Army and Navy caused the military strategists to conclude a Europe-first strategy was the best plan of attack. Based off of the advice of the various leaders of the United States Army and United States Navy, Roosevelt made the logical choice of pursuing a Europe-first strategy.

²⁰⁶ Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 148.

Conclusion

Henry Luce warned the American public in 1941 that if the United States did not directly enter the war against the Nazis, the world would “flounder for ten or 20 or 30 bitter years in a chartless and meaningless series of disasters.”²⁰⁷ Hitler and his followers unleashed a wave of cruelty against people on a level rarely matched in human history in the short amount of time they held power in Europe. Millions of Jews, Romanis, homosexuals and other groups of people deemed undesirable perished at the hands of the Nazis. One cannot begin to imagine the terrible atrocities Hitler and the Nazis would have committed if they endured for another 30 years.

In 1945, the United States Army released a newsreel entitled “Death Mills” in order to educate the public about the horrific treatment and extermination of Jews in Nazi occupied territories. The documentary followed the American liberation of concentration camps in Germany. Ohrdruf was the first concentration camp liberated by American soldiers, but more followed. High-ranking American military officials such as Eisenhower, General George S. Patton and General Omar Bradley visited the camps.²⁰⁸ Men who witnessed the carnage of war were shaken by the complete disregard for the sanctity of life shown by the Nazis.

The newsreel reveals the horrifying images the soldiers encountered in the camps. Mass graves filled with broken bodies existed at every camp. In many camps, the dead lay unburied and scattered throughout the area. The bodies showed clear evidence of starvation and abuse. Putrid smells of rotting flesh dominated the area. The Nazis covered

²⁰⁷ Luce, “American Century,” 160

²⁰⁸ United States Army, “Death Mills” (U.S. Army Signal Corps, 1945), newsreel.

the bodies in lime to help with decomposition.²⁰⁹ Soldiers could not believe what they saw in the camps.

The footage of Buchenwald proved especially devastating. Only 20,000 of the original 80,000 prisoners were found alive.²¹⁰ Soldiers discovered that the Germans tattooed serial numbers on the prisoners like farmers brand cattle. Kilns filled with torched human bones proved unnerving and absolutely terrifying. The narrator reported on the “world’s disgust at Germany’s organized carnage.”²¹¹ Many of those found alive in the camps were beyond medical help,

Video footage of the concentration camps provided undeniable proof of the evil actions of the Nazis. Americans had heard rumors of the atrocities committed in Germany-controlled Europe, but many hoped the stories were not true. Americans entered World War II to stop Germany in Europe, but the discovery of the concentration camps confirmed that the United States did not make a mistake by entering the war and eliminating the Nazis first. Stopping Hitler first allowed the Allies to prevent the Nazis from continuing and expanding their heinous crimes against humanity. A Pacific first strategy may have allowed the Nazis to continue their terrible crimes for a few more years. Public opinion, foreign relations and military strategists all hold valuable roles in determining war strategy. Roosevelt relied on each of these factors in order to decide that the United States needed to implement a Europe-first strategy in World War II.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

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